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PelhamNEWS

Book support



WAYNE CAMPBELL/SPECIAL TO POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Melanie Taylor-Ridgway, development and volunteer co-ordinator for the Pelham Public Library, hopes used books, such as one about Mr. Bean, will help buy shelves, carts, chairs, tables and technology for a new Maple Acre branch addition in Fenwick. See more on page 2.



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LOCAL NEWS

Bash for 60th heats up Wells of Hope stove campaign

WAYNE CAMPBELL
Special to Postmedia Network

For his 60th birthday party Saturday, Harry Alexander did not need presents.

However, he knew where money can change lives of poor rural families in Guatemala.

"I've seen what they don't have," he said.

During the past 10 years, he has made five trips with volunteers from Pelham Community Church to work on Wells of Hope school construction, health, water and community projects.

Alexander encouraged guests to his party on Tice Road in Pelham to give to a Wells of Hope stove project.

He helped to build a model stove to demonstrate at the party. It will be used for fundraising.

The brick-and-cement-block, wood-burning stove with metal top, ceramic trim

and galvanized steel pipe chimney is 80 centimetres high, 90 centimetres wide and 130 centimetres long.

In Guatemala, it would replace an open fire for cooking in a three-room house, typical in the poor mountain areas of the Central American nation.

Ben Obdeyn, a Wells of Hope director, called the open fires three-kilowatt pits.

A pot or pan sits on three stones over a wood fire.

"Smoke fills the room while the wife cooks for families of six to eight kids,"

That is, after spending much of the day collecting sticks to burn on the sparse mountain-side.

The stove uses one-third the fuel, eliminates smoke by carrying it through a steel pipe out the roof, warms the house and gives women more time for other activities such as learning, Obdeyn said.

It improves the health of family members by reduc-

ing lung problems caused by smoke.

Alexander said he saw a family of nine kids living with an indoor fire during one of his volunteer visits.

Niagara-based Wells of Hope is a charity set up to drill deep water wells to feed fresh water to villages, which rely on polluted streams. The charity has, however, found other needs in the poor Guatemala mountain communities.

Obdeyn said the stove project came up when there was a lull in construction of small school houses.

"We worked with the people there to design it," he said. "The stoves are built by local masons from materials made in Guatemala."

Wells of Hope raises money in Niagara but spends it in Guatemala to help the economy and employment, he said.

One stove costs about \$200. Wells of Hope has sponsored about 50. Other organizations,



WAYNE CAMPBELL/SPECIAL TO POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Harry Alexander with a stove he made to aid Wells of Hope relief efforts in Guatemala.

such as the Rotary Club, have also helped.

For Wells of Hope information and donations see the website www.wellssohope.com.

The model stove built for the Alexander's party is portable and will be used for local demonstrations. Materials

and expertise were donated by Burnstein Brick, Budget Sheet Metal, Ferrell Builders Supply and Mabo Westside Construction.

Book sale helping Fenwick library branch turn a page

WAYNE CAMPBELL
Special to Postmedia Network

Pelham Public Library wants to turn used books into new furniture.

Proceeds from its annual summer used book sale, which runs today to Saturday, will go to furnish the new Maple Ace Branch in Fenwick.

"We need chairs, tables, shelves, computer technology

and book carts," said development and volunteer co-ordinator Melanie Taylor-Ridgway.

The library has received more than 300 boxes of donated books for the sale.

"That's twice as much as we normally get," she said.

"Maybe the hot weather kept people inside and they weeded out their collections."

The book sale, in the Festival Room of the Fonthill branch,

will include fiction, non-fiction books, children's and cook books, games, videos and magazines.

A \$1-million addition to the historic 1919 Maple Ace branch is under construction in Fenwick.

While the Town of Pelham, which owns the library buildings, pays for the new section, the Pelham library board must raise \$50,000 for furnishings.

It will hold events such as the book sale and appeal to the public for donations.

The Pelham Art Festival will announce a contribution today. The association, which holds its annual art show at the Pelham arena on Mother's Day weekend, regularly donates to the Pelham library. The show began as a fundraiser to build the Fonthill library 30 years ago.

Taylor-Ridgway said the

semi-annual book sale raises more than \$3,000. However, she hopes to bring in more with the larger selection.

Library staff examines donations looking for books to keep for its collection.

"We usually find some," she said. "Many books are new, only read once."

After the book sales, the library shares leftovers with non-profit groups holding

sales or collecting books for use.

"It's a form of recycling," she said. "We also take donations of books throughout the year and during our sales."

A crew of about 65 volunteers run the week-long book sale held during regular library hours: Monday to Thursday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday noon to 5 p.m.

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Green light for NRE

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

The Niagara Regional Exhibition will happen this year, for sure.

Despite previously voting against holding a fair this year due to funding constraints, Niagara Regional Agricultural Society board members changed their minds last Monday night.

They voted instead to take advantage of nearly \$25,000 in city funding as well as from sponsors to organize a somewhat scaled-down version of the 163-year-old exhibition.

They also voted to hire Jane Thompson to help make it a reality, with less than a month to go before the fair is scheduled to open in mid-September at the Niagara Street fairgrounds.

During a special city council meeting last week, councillors voted to provide \$24,641 to the agricultural society to help fund the NRE with money originally earmarked for the Niagara Food Festival, which was cancelled after their organization went bankrupt.

The plan to save the fair was launched by board member Art Gill after he discussed the possibility of putting together the event with Thompson, who has spent more than a decade working for the food festival, the Welland Recreational Canal Corp. and other groups organizing large community events.

Gill, the board's co-treasurer, said Thompson wrote the city asking for funding, and he signed it and submitted it to the city of Welland on Aug. 3.

Not knowing if the city would support the request, Gill said he submitted the letter to the city without board approval because of the limited time remaining.

Gill said cancelling the fair was a divisive issue among board members, but after the city funding was approved the majority of board members supported the event.

The board voted by secret ballots that were destroyed after the votes were counted.

Explaining her reasons for getting involved, Thompson told board members the loss of the Niagara Food Festival followed by the cancellation of the fair created "a major void in our community."

"I'd hate to see 163 years gone," she said.

Although the board planned to bring the fair back for 2017 for Canada's 150th anniversary, Thompson said once events are cancelled for a year they often do not return.

"Everyone's entitled to their opinion. I get it," she said. "But I've worked in the event world for a long time, and once it's gone in the event world, it's normally lost."

Board members had a few concerns about the plan, including ensuring the agricultural community of the event remains at the forefront, while raising additional money.

Thompson was confident there is enough support for the event in the community to cover costs.

"I firmly believe the community will step up to the plate," she said.

One Welland company, for instance, has already committed \$5,000 to the exhibition, and Thompson said she has been in contact with other area businesses interested in getting involved.

She said event sponsorships usually average between \$50,000 and \$80,000, plus in-kind services.

"There are a ton of sponsors that would come on board," she said.

"When it comes to sponsorships, I know I can do it and then some."

Board member Bill Foote argued in favour of holding the fair, telling board chair Ray Ravazzolo that for the past 163 years "your dad (Ray Ravazzolo Sr.) and Art, and people like that have been putting something like this into the community, and then for one reason or another we're too proud or too stupid not to take advantage of the resources that are available to us."

Gill told board members if they did not hold a fair this year, "I guarantee



ALLAN BENNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Niagara Regional Agricultural Society co-treasurer Art Gill climbs aboard a tractor at the fairgrounds, preparing for an upcoming event. He teamed up with event organizer Jane Thompson to save this year's Niagara Regional Exhibition, approved by the board.

you'll never get another dime out of the city."

In an interview, Gill said he has faith in Thompson's ability to organize large

events.

"I knew she could do the job," he said.

Details about this year's NRE are

being finalized and will be released shortly.

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Clarifying agricultural minimum lot sizes

DAVE AUGUSTYN

So, a bit of an issue brewed throughout the summer — minimum lot sizes for agricultural properties.

The issue first arose during a neighbour vs. neighbour clash in an agricultural area in the Northern part of Pelham.

Unfortunately, it happens all the time. If two neighbours cannot get along, one or the other enlists the assistance of staff to enforce various town bylaws. Staff are often caught in the middle of such disputes. Staff must try to work with the parties after they make formal complaints against each other

over various bylaws — including noise, animal control, fences, signs, and clean yard — or for not having proper permits — including for building or demolition, open air burning, or site alteration. Sometimes it's an immediate neighbour that complains about another, and sometimes it's someone else. One complaint often leads to counter-complaints and counter-counter-complaints.

This makes balanced bylaw enforcement very difficult for staff. They act as impartially as possible, while focusing on the overall resolution

of all complaints between arguing neighbours. And, in extreme circumstances, any of the complaints could form part of a court or other quasi-judicial proceeding.

In a particular case in June, one party used the town's zoning bylaw to try to resolve disputes with his neighbour. You see, Pelham's 1987 Zoning Bylaw includes a 10 hectare (approximately 24 acre) "minimum lot size" for agriculturally zoned properties. If a property-owner has less than 24 acres — the complainant reasoned — that owner cannot have farm ani-

mals.

Initially, Town staff also enforced this complaint as a way to help find resolution between the neighbours for all their disputes.

Then, the one party called the media and set-up petitions about the Zoning Bylaw complaint. And the concern spread like wild-fire. If "minimum lot size" can be used against someone farming on 10 acres — reasoned the argument — perhaps it can be used against my farm on three, five, 10, 12.15, or 20 acres.

Staff dropped the enforce-

ment two weeks later, because, as we learned at Council on July 25 that provision of the zoning "applies to the creation of new lots" only, and that "existing lots are recognized."

Instead of something arbitrary like minimum lot sizes, the province actually provides rules for the types and number of animals allowed on a property based on their impact (odour, waste, etc) and their proximity to neighbours. This formulaic calculation, called Minimum Setback Distances (MDS), is already embedded in our

existing Zoning Bylaw.

So, since we are currently rewriting and updating the Town's overall zoning bylaw, council and staff will work together with agriculture property owners, the Federation of Agriculture, and the province to clarify the "minimum lot size" and MDS provisions so that we might settle the matter and "preserve our unique urban and rural blend."

You may contact Dave Mayer at mayordave@pelham.ca and view past columns at www.pelhammayor.dave.blogspot.com

Trading a notepad for controls of a small plane



MICHELLE ALLENBERG

When I started my day on Saturday the last thing I thought I'd be doing was flying a plane, but somehow I ended up doing just that.

I headed out to do my reporter thing for the annual COPA (Canadian Owners and Pilots Association) Kids Flight Day at Niagara Central Dorothy Bunting Airport. Children who had never been in a plane before got to take a trip up for free.

I all started off as it usually does, sussing out the situation — who to talk to and what to take photos of.

I found who I needed to talk to, a pilot about 40 years to Peter Van Caulart. It all started off normal, me asking a hundred questions and Van Caulart answering them. He said he enjoyed being part of the event because he wanted to share the joy of flying with the next generation of pilots.

"I've flown hundreds of kids and probably seven or eight of them turned into airline pilots

and another six or seven into Air Force pilots," Van Caulart said.

He then began selling me on the awesome experience of being in a small plane. He said it is completely different from flying in a commercial-sized plane.

"The world opens up below you and it's like 'Oh my god,'" he said.

At that point I didn't know how right he was, but I was soon to find out. After the interview he asked if I'd ever been in a small plane. I said no. With a smile on his face he said, "You want to go up?"

I said I couldn't, I have to work, and you know I get motion sickness. Which he quickly promised me I wouldn't get sick.

So, with a little convincing — OK, a lot of convincing — I agreed to go for a ride. But first I wanted to see how others had enjoyed their trip.

There were families with children from ages eight to 17 taking turns in small aircraft. They each took off with a trained pilot to experience the joys of being in a plane at however many hundreds of feet above the ground. Once they got back down to earth they received certificates for participation. They were all thrilled about the

day's adventure, showing off their certificates to my camera as I snapped photos.

One of the girls I talked to, Keyonna Cichocki, 10, from Welland said she didn't like heights and she threw up. Picking up on what she said I thought, "See, I knew I'd get motion sickness."

I finish talking to the rest of the group, who all loved the flights and didn't get motion sickness. I walked over to Van Caulart and let him know one of the young girls said she threw up. He looked at me and said we're doing this — I had no choice.

Everything was going well, he showed me all the things I needed to know for an emergency. He told me the doors don't open if we go down. I asked about a parachute, and he answered matter of fact that there are none.

"Great," I thought. We lined up on the runway and took off — the smoothest takeoff I've ever experienced in my life, and I've been on probably about two dozen planes or more.

I know you're probably thinking, "Hold on, you've been on how many planes and you're nervous?"

I've never been on a small plane, the kind with four seats and a window that opens. It



MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Pilot Peter Van Caulart takes a selfie of himself and Tribune reporter Michelle Allenberg as she flies a plane.

was nerve-wracking thinking about it, but once we were up above the clouds, what an awe inspiring moment — complete freedom.

I could see for miles and the Lake Erie shoreline was stunning, almost crystal clear. For a moment I forgot where I was, and I thought about the similarities the lake seemed to have with the Caribbean Sea or

the waters of Barcelona, Spain from up here.

Just as I was taking in the joys of flying, which I always have when in a jumbo jet, Van Caulart turned to me.

"Take the controls," he said.

"Uh, I don't think you want me to," I said with a nervous laugh.

I thought, "Doesn't he know I'll probably end up crashing

us into the deep blue?" But he didn't seem concerned as he slyly built my confidence enough for me to take the controls. First by having me hold the second set of controls while he was still holding his controls, then by taking his hands off and pointing out I was flying.

See PLANE on page 5

Cairns gets bail on historic sex charges

BILL SAWCHUK
Postmedia Network

Police have charged a prominent St. Catharines businessman and philanthropist with 24 historical sex offences.

Officers arrested Jeffrey Cairns, 60, last Tuesday after an investigation involving allegations of child sex offences.

Cairns was charged with eight counts of sexual assault, eight counts of sexual interference and eight counts of invitation to sexual touching. Niagara Regional Police said there is just one victim.

Cairns is president of Charlesway Corp. Ltd., a private investment firm based in St. Catharines, and was a member of Brock University's board of trustees.

An NRP spokesperson said police had nothing further to add at this time.

A call to the family home went unanswered. After a hearing last Wednesday, Cairns was released on \$10,000 bail with a number of conditions, including that he reside at the family cottage or the home of a business associate and friend. He is prohibited from visiting public pools,

parks, playgrounds, school-grounds or community centres and from being in the company of children under the age of 16.

His lawyer, David Kerr, said he had no comment as he left the courthouse.

Jim Asselstine, managing director and chief executive officer at Charlesway Corp., was in the courtroom last Wednesday alongside Cairns' wife, but said he couldn't comment.

Brock University spokesman Dan Dakin said Cairns had "resigned from the Brock University board of trustees, effective August 17, 2016."

Reached at the Ontario Association of Municipalities conference in Windsor last Tuesday, Mayor Walter Sank-tyak said he wasn't aware of the arrest and wasn't in a position to offer comment.

The Cairns family is prominent in St. Catharines and known for their philanthropic endeavours. They have made significant contributions to



JEFFREY CAIRNS

Niagara organizations over the years, and Cairns' father, Roy, who died in 2011, donated \$6 million to Brock in 2010.

Jeffrey Cairns made a \$500,000 donation to the city's recently opened \$60-million performing arts centre. The Cairns Recital Hall is a 300-seat venue and rehearsal space in the venue.

According to his LinkedIn profile, Cairns is also a director of the following organizations: St. John Ambulance Niagara Falls branch, Niagara Academic and Health Sciences Advisory Council, Lincoln & Welland Regional Foundation, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment Museum and the advisory panel to the minister of Canadian heritage.

He was also the former commanding officer of the Lincoln & Welland Regiment. A spokesman at National Defence said they wouldn't comment on an issue that is before the courts and that Cairns was retired from the military.

Cairns was arrested last Tuesday and held in custody before his bail hearing last Wednesday at the Robert S.K. Welch Courthouse.

Investigators believe there may be additional victims who have not yet come forward. They ask anyone with information to contact Det. Mike Ryan or Det. Sarah Ross of the NRP's sexual assault unit.

bsawchuk@postmedia.com

The last thing I thought I'd be doing was flying a plane

PLANE from page 4

At first I was just holding on, keeping us flying straight, but then he asked me to turn. He pointed at a small island and started talking to me about the lighthouse on the island. I forgot for a moment I was flying and without even knowing I turned towards the island.

"See, you're turning just by looking, it's easy," he said to me.

Just as I started to get comfortable again, he asked me to turn the other way. The plane started to tilt with more of an angle, which made me nervous again.

"Seriously, I'm going to crash us," I thought.

But again I turn and things

level out. I pull the control toward me and we start to gain altitude. I push the control away from me and we start to level out.

I flew for about 10 minutes or so by myself, and I felt fantastic — the most thrilling thing I've done in ages. And I think I've caught the flying bug, because once we landed I wanted to do it again.

Being able to look through the windows and see all around you for miles and miles is such an amazing experience.

All the children who had the chance to fly on Saturday are truly lucky.

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New lives for dogs on death row



LAURA BARTON/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Niagara Dog Rescue volunteers are helping dogs escape high kill shelters in the United States and find loving homes here in Canada. Pictured here are some of the volunteers with a mix of their own dogs. Top row, from left: Ashley Soper, Jennifer Cormier and Mike Mulvihill. Bottom row, from left: Cheryl Curcio, Beth Poulin, Samantha Janjac and Candice Chute.

LAURA BARTON Postmedia Network

One Niagara non-profit is helping dogs in high kill shelters find their forever homes.

Niagara Dog Rescue, a fully volunteer-run organization, seeks out dogs in United States kill shelters and offers them a chance at life on this side of the border.

Many of the dogs they rescue are days, sometimes only hours, from being put down because no home could be found for them.

"We do rescue some from Canada as well," said volunteer Beth Poulin. "We're partnering with a couple of organizations that are dealing with ... reservations and culling of dogs there."

The organization, which started in 2014, is all about the canines.

Volunteer Jennifer Cormier said she does it for the love of the dogs and ensuring they find the best home possible.

"There is an extensive application process a person has to go through before they can call one of the rescue dogs their own. There's an interview process, reference check and meet-and-greets to make sure everyone is a good fit."

"(People) fall in love with this picture of the dog and the image they think the dog is like," Poulin said. "They insist,

and they answer yes to every question that we ask them and they answer every question the way they think we want. And then the dog is not what they've worked up in their head."

Sometimes people and dogs just don't mesh well, no matter how cute they look in a photograph. It's all about determining each individual personality.

Cormier said she had an adoptee come to a meet-and-greet and spend two hours with the dog before making the decision. In this person's case, she was seeing how well the dog might do as a therapy animal.

Some of the dogs have ended up as a part of Therapy Tail's Niagara branch, too.

Poulin laughed and said Niagara Dog Rescue is taking over the region.

In some ways it is, considering a recent rise in popularity. Over the summer, the volunteers have seen up to 15 applications a day for the pouches.

"People need to be patient with us," said Ashley Soper, who deals with communications.

Many have sent frustrated e-mails wondering what's taking so long, but what the group would like people to remember is they're all volunteers.

See DOGS on page 9

Dr. Kimberly Dobson

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Activities may be held within your own local business or free-of-charge at the Pelham Public Library, pending on space and other limitations.

Please note the following requirements to register an activity:

- The activity is FREE to the public & takes place during the Culture Days Weekend: September 30 - October 2, 2016

- The activity involves some form of interaction, hands-on components for participants & is registered at www.pelham.ca/culture-days

Register at pelham.ca/culture-days by Friday, September 16, 2016

For more information, contact Paul Reynolds at paulreynolds@pelham.ca 905-892-3037 ext. 345



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Niagara Dog Rescue helping dogs on both sides of the border

DOGS from page 6

Each emphasized they could use more manpower. There are many ways a person could help out, such as dealing with applications, the interview process or transportation.

Because the dogs are coming in from the U.S., it means having someone who can pick them up at the border.

Volunteer Candice Shute said, "You don't need to be from Niagara to be a foster or even to be a volunteer."

The organization doesn't have a home base, so everything is spread out.

As a non-profit, the group relies on fundraisers and donations to help make what they do possible.

Anyone who would like to

get in touch with them to volunteer, foster or adopt can visit www.niagaradogrescue.org. They are also available on most social media platforms.

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LOCAL NEWS

Volunteers win praise at dragon boat championship

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

After a busy few days, the 2016 Canadian Dragon Boat Championship

came to an end Sunday in Welland.

Chloe Greenhalgh, executive director of Dragon Boat Canada, said the three days at the Welland International

Flatwater Centre have been "excellent." She said the weather was great, the athletes had a great time and the volunteers have made the event a success.

"They (volunteers) just keep smiling and working harder and better every year. They so know their jobs, and their commitment to the level of excellence on behalf of the city of

Welland is outstanding. They really, really care and it's outstanding," Greenhalgh said.

See DRAGON on page 16



Summer Music Festival

Friday August 26th 7:00PM FREE CONCERT!

This is one Elvis Tribute Artist you don't want to miss! Matt Cage is a multi-award winner, holding Professional championship titles across Canada and the United States. Recently, Matt appeared in Las Vegas as a featured Elvis performer in All Shook Up: A Tribute to the King at Planet Hollywood.

MATT CAGE
Award Winning
Elvis Tribute Artist

The Toronto-born performer has a love of Elvis and strives to keep his memory alive. Matt has portrayed the King in sold-out theatres, festival headlining shows, musical plays, television and more. From the hip-swiveling 50s to the stunning vocals of the 70s, Cage does it all.

Matt will be backed by the amazing nine piece Casino Brothers Band. The Casino Brothers are widely regarded as Canada's best tribute band. Combined with the talents of Matt Cage, it is a combination that cannot be missed!



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MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

A couple watches as dragon boat paddlers cruise past the dock at Welland International Flatwater Centre.

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LOCAL NEWS

Sex assault centre to monitor hospital services

MARYVON FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Niagara Sexual Assault Centre plans to keep a watchful eye on St. Catharines hospital to ensure victims have local access to the treatment they deserve.

Cheri Huys, co-ordinator of the centre's hospital response team, said she's happy Niagara Health System has taken action and committed to reinstating 24-hour service for sexual assault victims at the hospital.

However, she does plan to continue monitoring the program, which she says has long been plagued with uncovered shifts.

Huys spoke out publicly after receiving notice the service would be unavailable in Niagara for a two-week period beginning Aug. 8.

Instead, sexual assault victims coming to the hospital for assistance would be medically cleared and then given the option to take a taxi, paid for by the NHS, to Hamilton or Burlington for forensic evidence to be collected.

During the gap in service, Huys is aware of two people who reached out for help — one who opted for the ride out of town and another who declined.

The centre has had concerns about the program's staffing for some time and after receiving a handful of notices earlier this summer about uncovered shifts, a letter was sent mid-July asking the NHS to address the problem.

Huys, who wrote the letter, said she was responded to the next day and assured the issue would be resolved.

But again in August the notices began arriving for uncovered shifts, which prompted her to take action and go public with her concerns.

"We're doing this in support of SADV (sexual assault domestic violence treatment centre). We don't want to make trouble," Huys said. "We want to support this team in any way that we can. This has been an ongoing issue. We want to see that change."

It was an unanticipated staff leave that resulted in the most recent service gap, the NHS said earlier last week.

Despite the difficulties encountered, Huys remains hopeful the NHS will get staffing back on track.

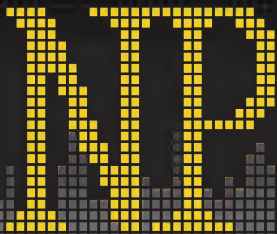
"They've said they're going to have coverage starting on Saturday. We will definitely be confirming that."

See **HOSPITAL** on page 17



JULIE JUCSKA / POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Ambulances line up to drop off patients at the St. Catharines hospital in this file photo.



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See website for more information on Pelham Panthers programs

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LOCAL NEWS

A big round of applause for the volunteers

DRAGON from page 12

What makes Welland International Flatwater Centre such a great venue for Greenhalgh is everything the organizers need is available. At other locations she's held events organizers have had to build most structures and courses from scratch.

"It's turnkey, so we don't have to rent things or build things ... To be here where everything is turnkey, we don't have to drop our own race course, all those kinds of

things," Greenhalgh said.

She said what makes nationals great for communities is people come from all over, not only athletes, but also vendors. Nationals expose people to new places and different festivals.

The championship hosted in Welland was the first qualifier event. Next year will be a race-off for crews to be chosen to go to the world championships in 2018, which will be held in Hungary.

Anyone from the first

qualifier is able to qualify for the 2018 world championships, whether they win or not. The only requirement to qualify for the world's is to participate in two qualifier events.

"This is the first step in the path, but we do not eliminate anyone. Everybody is welcome to try a hand and win a spot."

Results from the races can be found at dbcresults.ca.

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LOCAL NEWS

Niagara Health System reinstating 24-hour service in Hospitals for Sex assault victims

HOSPITAL from page 14

Request for further comment on the issue from the NHS was responded to with an e-mailed statement.

"Our focus is on ensuring our patients and their families receive high-quality care close to home," Jill Randall, director of patient care, emergency and cardiac, said in the e-mail. "We are sorry for the concern created by this temporary measure, which was the result of unexpected staffing pressures."

Randall reaffirmed that implementation of an interim staffing coverage plan for the program would begin Saturday.

"As we move forward, we are committed to having a permanent staffing model in place by September so all of our patients in need can receive this specialized service. Our priority is ensuring all patients receive the care they deserve."

The Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant local health integration network will also be monitoring the sexual assault and domestic violence program, as it has done in the past, said Steve Isaak, director of health system transformation.

"It has been about six years since the LHIN took on accountability for the program."

"We do meet with all of our hospitals on a quarterly basis and we review all kinds of performance-related issues, looking at volumes, looking at other aspects," he said. "This line item related to the dedicated funding for this program is included so when we meet with them ... we review their statistics, their performance, how things are going and they identify for us if there's any variation in what's expected through the accountability agreement."

Isaak noted there have not been any issues raised in past meetings.

With the recent concerns raised, the program will be a topic of discussion during the next meeting this fall, he said.

"We will make sure we are looking very carefully at how the hospital is responding."

As for program funding being appropriately used, which was also questioned by the centre, Isaak said there

are dollars specifically dedicated to the service that cannot be used elsewhere.

It was the Ministry of Health that set the program's budget "quite a long time ago," he said, adding that amount provided from the province has not changed over the years.

The NHS, however, has of its own accord invested additional dollars, he said.

When the program was created, its funding was built into the hospital's base budget.

Despite that structure, the dedicated funds cannot be used for any other program, Isaak stressed.

"There's an agreement that would have been signed originally between the hospital and the ministry to that effect."

Isaak said that while the NHS has the ability to reduce or increase the program's budget, the LHIN "would want to ensure any changes in funding are brought to our attention."

Ministry of Health spokesman David Jensen said the province recognizes the importance of timely access to appropriate treatment and care for Ontarians who have experience sexual assault, harassment and domestic violence.

As such, Premier Kathleen Wynne made a commitment in 2015 to strengthen supports provided by treatment centres and maintain 24/7 service.

Jensen said the ministry is aware of the "unanticipated staffing issue" at the St. Catharines hospital and of the intention to have services reinstated.

The ministry is not aware of any other centres that are currently experiencing a staffing shortage.

"However, we recognize that due to the high level of training needed for these positions and the sensitive nature of the care being provided, hospitals may at times, experience challenges recruiting and maintaining staff," Jensen said.

The ministry will be working with the LHINs and the treatment centres to review the program model in an effort to identify areas for improvement.

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